



United States Department of Agriculture

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**SCHAFER INVITES STUDENTS TO JOIN DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUTURE OF
AGRICULTURE**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5, 2008 – Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer today announced the selection of 17 university students invited for discussions of agriculture’s future at USDA’s 2008 Agricultural Outlook Forum. The conference, “Energizing Rural America in the Marketplace,” will be held Feb. 21 and 22 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.

“Agriculture’s future grows from the inspiration and innovation of our next generation of agriculturalists,” said Schafer. “USDA’s Outlook Forum places students at the doorstep of what government and industry leaders envision for the economic outlook, policies, and direction of agriculture’s future.”

The university juniors and seniors majoring in agricultural-related studies at Land Grant universities were selected based on their essays, “Agriculture as a Career” and recommendations from their deans.

The students chosen to represent their universities are: Dominique Antoine, Alcorn State University; Laura Sossamon, University of Arkansas; Vicki Brown and Amber Tyler, Kansas State University; Eric Lang, Langston University; Louis Vaughn, Mississippi State University; Travis Jett and Lindsey Price, Oklahoma State University; Johnnie L. Jones, III, Prairie View

A&M University; Sarah Hoerner and Alanna Kmicikewycz, University of Illinois; Nicol Hucke and Jennie E. Powell, University of Maryland Eastern Shore; Matthew Brooks and Ronald M. Howell, Jr., Virginia State University; Candi Wilson and Cassi Wyman, Washington State University.

USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum Student Diversity Program was launched in 2007 to provide students a unique insight into their agricultural studies. This year, sponsoring corporations and USDA agencies include: CHS Foundation; Tyson Foods, Inc., Deere & Company; Farm Credit Bank of Texas; USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; Economic Research Service; and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Guest speakers at the 2008 Forum include Stephen Johnson, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; C. Larry Pope, President and CEO of Smithfield Foods; Paul Schickler, President, Pioneer Hi-Bred, and Vice President, DuPont; and Robert Stenzel President and CEO, United Fresh Produce Association. Jean-Marie Peltier, President and CEO of National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, will serve as moderator. USDA speakers include Secretary Schafer, Acting Chief Economist Joseph Glauber, Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Mark Keenum, and Rural Development Under Secretary Thomas Dorr.

Registration is \$350 for the 2-day event. Plenary speeches are webcast after 3:30 p.m. EST on Feb. 21, with speech and slide presentations posted online at the end of each day's session. A full roster of speakers and registration information are available at: www.usda.gov/oce/forum.

Writers, reporters, and editors may also call Press Room Coordinator Priscilla Smith at 202-694-5022 or Forum Coordinator Brenda Chapin at 202-720-5447 for more details.

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